

3. TAILORING THE GUIDELINES

3.1 TAILORING THE GUIDELINES

Any project can benefit from the processes in the Quality Assurance Guidelines, but the specific use of the processes on a project needs to take into account the characteristics of that project. The extent to which these guideline processes are applied to a given project varies based on its criticality, size, cost, and other features. In some cases, the guidelines will be used more informally than in others. Some deliverables or reviews can be abbreviated for smaller projects, while they need careful detail in larger and more complex projects. For small projects, the same person may perform multiple roles, where larger projects may have multiple people performing the same role.

To help project teams use the model guidelines efficiently and effectively, each one has a section on tailoring the process to the nature of the project. In most cases, the tailoring is based on the overall size and complexity of the project. In at least one case, tailoring is recommended based on when the process is applied in the product life cycle.

3.2 LEVEL OF QUALITY ASSURANCE FOCUS

To determine the right level of quality assurance, i.e. the appropriate use of a process, projects are divided into three levels of focus, based on the following collection of project characteristics:

- Budget – funds required to perform the project, generally a reflection also of the effort for software and systems projects (since much of the cost is in the effort)
- Organizations involved – those participating in the project as stakeholders
- Time to deliver – calendar time for the project
- Impact on Agency – depth of change implied to the organization processes
- Impact Outside the Agency
- Technology – maturity of the technology being used
- Supplier Involvement – type and level of experience working with the suppliers
- System Complexity – assessment of how difficult the system will be to develop and/or integrate with existing systems

The Quality Assurance Focus Table shows example values of these characteristics that suggest high, medium, or low focus on quality assurance activities. Each of the quality assurance guideline processes suggests how to modify the process for projects that match these characteristics. As an agency adapts a process to its use, it should identify any other project characteristics to consider, and corresponding ways to modify each process. Then, that information should be added to the agency's version of the Quality Assurance Focus Table and to the tailoring tables in each process.

Note that the characteristics listed in the following table represent the industry-recognized factors that are most closely related to a project's probability of success. Here, success means on time delivery, within budget, with desired functionality and acceptable quality levels. If an agency's projects have different characteristics, or additional characteristics, they should be placed in the table, with entries in each corresponding cell.

| Characteristic | Low Focus | Medium Focus | High Focus |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Budget (with implied effort) | Less than \$500,000 | \$500,000 - \$1,000,000 | \$1,000,000 or greater |
| Organizations Involved | work group within agency | agency-wide | More than one agency or government involved |
| Time to Deliver | less than 6 months to operation | between 6 months and a year to operation | More than a year to operational status |
| Impact on Agency | Minimal change, or extends systems now in use | Moderate change or modifies systems now in use, but doesn't change work processes | Significant change to work methods of agency personnel and/or delivery of services to agency clients |
| Impact Outside Agency | Affects mostly internal operations of the agency | Indirectly impacts citizens and/or has some visibility to the legislature | Directly impacts citizens of the State and/or has high visibility to the legislature |
| Technology | Standard, proven agency technology | Proven in industry or at State level, but new to agency or program areas | Emerging, unproven, or new for the State |
| Supplier Involvement | Good experience in the past working with this supplier | Other agencies have had problems with this supplier or team members are distributed in several locations | Outsourcing for the first time, working with a new supplier, or the supplier has been difficult to deal with in the past |
| System Complexity | standalone system | some integration with another system | New system needs to integrate with several others, and/or they are critical systems |

Quality Assurance Focus Table

3.3 USING THE TAILORING GUIDANCE

Within each guideline process, suggestions are provided on how to tailor the following process elements:

- Activities – how to interpret the activities of the guideline, based on the level of quality assurance focus; in general, each activity is listed, with suggestions for how a project at each level of focus performs that activity
- Roles – what roles may be handled differently, depending on the project characteristics; in general, a subset of the roles is cited, since most of the roles for a project will be the same, no matter its size or complexity
- Deliverables – how specific deliverables might be build differently, based on the project characteristics; in general, a subset of the deliverables is cited, since some will be the same for all types of projects

A project manager and/or team will first review their project's characteristics against the agency's Quality Assurance Focus Table and decide what level of focus is appropriate for their project. Then, using this level of focus, they will review the guideline process to determine how best to adapt it to their project. They document that tailored approach in their Project Development Plan.

3.4 RELATIONSHIP TO RISK AND ISSUE MANAGEMENT

From the *Glossary*, a risk is defined as “The possibility of an act or event occurring that would have an adverse effect on the state, an organization, or an information system.” The key word is “possibility.” For the Quality Assurance Focus Table, the values of the characteristics that determine the level of QA focus should be known with fair certainty. Thus, these characteristics do not usually represent risk factors. However, there will be other factors that have an impact on project success, for which the future occurrence is unknown, i.e. they haven't happened yet, but might in the future. These are identified during the project's risk management process. Still other factors are characteristic of the agency, not to any particular project, e.g. chronic shortage of resources, lack of executive support, lack of project management training, etc. When these characteristics are present for a project, they should be classified as issues and dealt with as described in the Project Development Plan section covering issue management.